

[One In and One Out]

Roaldus Richmond Recorded in Writers' Section Files

DATE: AUG 23 1940 "Men Against Granite" ONE IN AND ONE OUT

In the long barroom, [nasty?] and cool even in midsummer, two men sat in one of the low-backed booths. Galli, the stonecutter, had the heavy red face, thick bull neck and massive shoulders of an old time bruiser. He might have been a broken-down [pugilist?] a bouncer in some saloon. His square body bulged the blue suit he wore and he looked a trifle uncomfortable in it. He was unemployed because the shed in which he worked had just burned down. [Lizzotti?], the ex-stonecutter, was trim and slender, at ease in his well-made clothes. His features were sharply cut, almost handsome, and the dark hair rumpled over his forehead gave him a boyish appearance. He was permanently out of the granite business — from choice.

All around them swirled blue smoke and the talk of war, baseball, local and major league; horse-racing at Rockingham; ribald jokes and laughter, gossip, politics, business, gambling, crops, weather, and women.

"So you're taking pictures now, huh?" Galli's hoarse voice rasped into a laugh. "Ain't that a hell of a way for a man to make a living though? But you always was too soft for the stone business."

"What the hell you talking about?" demanded Lizzotti, laughing too. "I was a good man and you [know?] it. I was too smart to stay in it, that's all. Too smart, not too soft. I was in it ten years. Than one day I decided to get the hell out and I did. I never even went back after my tools. The only time I been near the sheds since was to take picture of them. That's

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close enough for me. I seen too much of what it done to others. I seen them go up on the hill to the san. I decided to go the other way. I ain't sorry I did either."

"Aw, it's all right with them new suctions." 2 "Maybe, maybe it is. But not for this boy. I'm satisfied taking pictures. I'm doing all right, Galli. I ain't got the business location or the equipment the other studios got maybe, but I take good pictures. Everybody likes my work, that's the main thing. If I had more capital I'd run these other bastards out of business. But I ain't kicking. And I wish you could see some of the hot stuff I get to develop from some of these girls in summer camps. In the raw. Some of those pictures you wouldn't believe. Supposed to be nice girls from nice families, too. I keep the prints. One Christmas I put some out on Christmas cards and sent them around to all the boys. If some of those girls' folks ever run across them I bet there'd be hell to pay all right."

"You always was a woman-chaser, Lizzotti. A goddamn floozie-chaser. Me, I'd rather sit here and drink ale."

Lizzotti laughed. "You should've seen the one I had the other night. I never got hold of anything like her. Stayed with her all night. Then you know what she says to me? She says: 'Oh, you better go home and eat spinach spinach!'"

"Bah!" exploded Galli. "You're a hell of a married man. Your wife ought to take the cleaver to you. Hey, did you see that fire the other night? That was one sonofabitch of a fire."

"I saw it. I got some swell pictures of it. They came out better'n I thought. They got 'em down in Finkler's window. Maybe you seen 'em there."

"What the hell I want to see pictures of it for?" I seen the whole thing. Take two sheds like that it makes some fire. It lighted way up the sky. It looked like that whole end of town was going to go. Them sparks flying. I didn't feel very good looking at it, I tell you. Think of the 3 goddamn loss — the sheds, machinery, tools, and the granite — gone to hell. And work for about seventy-five men.

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"They was nice people to work for, by God. Never worked no better place. They always treat you good. It always happens to them kind of people. They always get the bad luck. Take some other lousy guy has a shed. You build the biggest fire in the world under it, it won't burn!

"I'm going to work right off in Barre. I only lose two-three days. They know me pretty good in Barre. I worked there about fifteen years. In Montpelier I work ten-twelve years, I guess. I lose track. I earned a lot of money cutting stone, but I ain't saved any of it. Didn't save before I got married. Now the wife and kids help to spend it. What the hell can you do? No fun saving it anyway, even if you could.

"You know Tony the Turk got hurt, day before the fire. A block fell and caught his leg. Not square but bad enough. Cut that leg, from ass to ankle. He's in the hospital. He won't walk for quite a while. He was swearing when they took him out. Said the christly lumpers didn't know how to hitch a block. It must've hurt like a bitch all right. Them things happen. They got it in the sheds same as in the quarries. But you don't get that taking pictures, huh Lizzotti?"

"I don't want it," grinned the other. "Is a man a sissy, for chrisake, because he don't try to get himself killed?"

Galli's hoarse laugh rolled out, his big red fist pounded the board. "Two more here! What kinda service you got? When you see empty glasses in front of me you wanta fill 'em up.

"They was good people to work for. They won't build again. There's plenty old sheds not-used they can move into. You think a shed like that 4 costs \$75,000? Put some more on top of that maybe you'll come right. It's the new machinery costs. The insurance won't cover it I bet you. They lose plenty. And lots of men don't work right off neither. Some of 'em maybe never get back in. Not unless business picks up. And to pick up business you

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got to do, I don't know... Another war, I guess maybe. I feel bad though, they was such nice people.

“They let you alone to do your work. Not like some of these places. One day I went to work in a shed. At noon I was eating my lunch. A fellow comes up and says: 'How you like it here?' I says: 'I don't like this goddamn rathole!' And he was the boss! One of the bosses. They had so many you couldn't tell. I didn't know it. At four o'clock I got my check. I was done. I didn't give a good goddamn, I could get a job all right. They was all French there. I was glad to get out. I don't work with French bastards!

“That shed had bosses watching all time to see how much you do. For chrisake! The boss watch you — you watch him. Neither one of you do anything. Ain't it true? You just watch each other, not work. They leave me alone I do a day's work. Always I did that, and I always will. I do my day's work but I don't like no bastard on my back all time. I don't stand that stuff. But most of the places are pretty good. They leave you alone to do your work. Hell of a lot better that way, and hell of a lot more work done.

“I'm a letter-cutter now. No fancy carving. I do finishing too. I come from the mountains in north Italy. Mussolini, I don't like, and Hitler I don't like. Both crazy for power. But Mussolini give credit for two things. He made a big man out of a little man, a big country out of a small one. But when he declared war on France I was ashamed. France was already licked by 5 Hitler. I come as a kid with my old man. My mother dead. Four of us kids come. I don't remember much about the trip, we was sick. And in New York scared and crying. All went into the granite business, all scattered to hell now. The old man cut stone in the old country; he had a shed here when he died. My brother, the oldest, took it when the old man died, but he lost it. No head on him like the old man. Not me either. Just a couple stonecutters, good for nothing else. What part of Italy you come from, Lizzotti?”

“I was born in this country,” Lizzotti told him.

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"Maybe then," said Galli with his mighty laugh, "That is the matter with you."

"Go on back to Italy if you like it so well," Lizzotti said, "go on back and they'll give you a gun and a handful of bombs. Go back and be a brave soldier for Mussolini."

Galli shook his head. "I like it O.K. right here."